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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [UN](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: OMAN BLASTS UN SECURITY COUNCIL FOR FAILING TO  
CALL FOR GAZA CEASEFIRE

REF: MUSCAT 006

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: Convoking resident ambassadors of UN Security Council member nations, Oman's foreign minister excoriated the Council for failing to enact a resolution for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza without preconditions and equated its inaction with the condoning of the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians. Noting the public passions this subject aroused, he further remarked that he was unsure of "how much longer we can control this." In an unprecedented step, the government essentially unleashed a media ambush on the departing ambassadors in a likely attempt to look proactive before its citizens and help re-focus public ire away from Arab leaders. Omani officials are clearly worried by public opinion over the situation in Gaza and appear ready to utilize new methods to address it. End Summary.

12. (C) On the morning of January 5, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) unexpectedly convened the Ambassador and the chiefs of mission of other UN Security Council countries resident in Oman for a meeting with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi that afternoon. Ambassadors from the following countries in addition to the U.S. attended the meeting: United Kingdom, Russia, China, France, Japan, Austria, Turkey and Libya. (Note: The Libyan ambassador does not speak English and was accordingly unable to follow the conversation. He was, however, provided a written statement in Arabic. End Note.)

13. (C) Visibly upset and uncharacteristically emotional, bin Alawi proceeded to blast UN Security Council members for failing to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. While apologizing for the harshness of his message, he condemned the Security Council for shirking its "moral and legal obligation" to stop the bloodshed and directly equated the Council's failure to approve a ceasefire resolution with support for the "Israeli massacre" of civilians. A few ambassadors attempted to speak in their countries' defense and/or point out Hamas' culpability for the violence, but bin Alawi refused to accept their arguments. There was no excuse for the Security Council's inaction and only one legitimate response it could take: a resolution for an immediate ceasefire without any preconditions. Israel would not halt its actions without anything less, he asserted, adding that diplomacy to address the causes of the violence could be conducted after the shooting stopped. Referencing Arab media coverage of events in Gaza and the public passions it aroused, he remarked, "I don't know how much longer we can control this." Responding to the Ambassador's question, bin Alawi said Arab ambassadors traveling to New York and the UN today would make the same plea.

14. (C) At the conclusion of the meeting, the ambassadors were politely ushered from the room towards the staircase leading to the ministry lobby. At the foot of the stairs, however, lay something unheard of at the MFA for such an

event: six journalists with pen and paper in hand ready with questions. The Ambassador side-stepped a question from the government-orchestrated media ambush and returned to the chancery.

15. (C) Comment: The Omani government is genuinely worried about public opinion over violence in Gaza and is taking unprecedented steps to address it. Of particular note from the MFA meeting is bin Alawi's expressed fear of losing control of public reaction over events in Gaza. It is unclear whether the minister meant this in a broader sense to include Arab populations as a whole, or if he is worried about what the Omani public might do as Israeli military strikes in Gaza continue and there are more calls for protests (reftel). That bin Alawi would voice such a concern is nevertheless very surprising.

16. (C) Comment (continued): Also noteworthy is the placement of reporters ready to pounce on the ambassadors following the meeting, which was clearly intended for public consumption. The government's staging of this likely means it is very concerned with looking passive or ineffectual to its citizens as the Arab media denounces Arab leaders for failing to stop the violence in Gaza. By using the local media to re-focus attention away from Arab countries and towards the UN, Omani officials may be hoping to appear "tough" and take pressure off of themselves, especially after their recent silence on events in Gaza (reftel). The government has yet to make any official statement on the Gaza crisis beyond what appeared in the December 30 GCC Summit communique. End Comment.  
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